

Ernie Fletcher
Governor



W. James Host
Secretary, Commerce Cabinet

KENTUCKY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Kent Whitworth, Executive Director

FACT SHEET

**The Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky
A Project of the Kentucky Oral History Commission**

In 1998, the Kentucky Oral History Commission, a program of the Kentucky Historical Society, initiated a statewide project to document the struggle to end legal segregation in the commonwealth between 1930 and 1970. The purpose of the project is to provide an extensive base of oral history interviews from which to develop educational programming that will advance understanding of the history and legacy of the civil rights movement in Kentucky.

Dr. Betsy Brinson directed the project from 1988 until the summer of 2002. The project was officially completed at that time; however, the staff of the Kentucky Oral History Commission continues to develop educational programming based on the collection, and the commission provides grant support to researchers to collect additional interviews on the civil rights movement.

As of March 1, 2003, the project has accomplished the following:

- More than 200 interviews have been collected on the civil rights movement in Kentucky. One hundred and twenty-five are located in the Special Collections Department at the Kentucky History Center. Dr. Brinson conducted the majority of interviews. Additional interviews were collected by Dr. Tracy K'Meyer, University of Louisville, and are located at the University Archives. All the interviews have been transcribed and are available to the public.
- "Voices of Protest: The Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky" symposium was held in February 2000 at the Kentucky History Center. The symposium introduced the public to the oral history project and included presentations by several of the individuals whose stories are a part of the collection. More than 250 people attended.
- ***Living the Story: The Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky***, the first documentary to explore Kentucky's civil rights history, was produced in 2002 for the Kentucky Oral History Commission by Video Editing Services in Lexington. The documentary presents the powerful stories of fifteen men and women who recall life in a segregated society and the struggle to achieve social justice. The video was produced and directed by Arthur Rouse and Joan Brannon with Betsy Brinson as executive producer. It was based on the interviews in the civil rights collection.
- ***Living the Story*** premiered on Kentucky Educational Television on January 21, 2002, the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. That evening sixteen viewing parties were held in community centers and college campuses throughout the state to provide the public with a forum in which to watch the documentary and engage in dialogue on issues of race relations. More

than 1,500 people participated in the viewing parties with more than 300 attending the event at Central High School in Louisville. Kentucky Educational Television rebroadcast ***Living the Story*** twice in 2002, twice in 2003, and once in 2004.

- Copies of the documentary ***Living the Story*** were provided free to all public and private high schools in Kentucky. Teaching units and other educational materials were created and were delivered to Kentucky schools through the Kentucky Educational Television STAR Channel and Web site.
- Arthur Rouse, director of the documentary, produced ***The Rest of the Story*** in 2003. The series consisted of one-hour rough edits of the full interviews with the individuals whose stories were presented in ***Living the Story***. ***The Rest of the Story*** has aired several times on late night Kentucky Educational Television and has been broadcast to schools.
- Eight radio programs that presented excerpts from the civil rights collection were produced for the *Voices of Kentucky* radio series. Dr. Doug Boyd, oral history archivist at the Kentucky Historical Society, produced the programs.
- Two performance pieces were created and directed by the Museum Theatre program of the Kentucky Historical Society. *Nothing New for Easter: Shopping for Civil Rights in Kentucky* was presented 74 times to approximately 1,582 people at the Kentucky History Center. *Red, White and Black: The Bradens, the Wades and a Bombing* was presented 123 times to about 3,185 people.
- The American Association for State and Local History awarded the Civil Rights Movement in Kentucky Oral History Project an Award of Merit in 2002, the highest award given to state projects.

Current Activities

"Unfinished Business: School Desegregation in Kentucky," a symposium marking the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, is scheduled for March 30 at the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort. The symposium will feature many of the individuals whose stories are a part of the oral history collection

A Web site is being developed that will provide for comprehensive access to more than 300 hours of audio and 18 hours of video content, plus 10,000 pages of electronic transcripts. The site is designed primarily to aid students and teachers in accessing the rich stories contained in the oral history collection.

Dr. Betsy Brinson and Dr. Cate Fosl (University of Louisville) are collaborating on a book of edited transcripts from the civil rights collection.

Two projects were recently funded by the Kentucky Oral History Commission to collect interviews on desegregation in northern Kentucky and on the civil rights movement in Paducah.